



Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

Old State Capitol • Springfield • 62701

October 9, 1985

Site: Municipal Courts Building
Chicago, IL

Date: August 29, 1985

William McLenahan
Commission on Chicago Historic &
Architectural Landmarks
320 North Clark St.
Chicago, IL 60610

Dear Mr. McLenahan:

This letter is to notify you that the place named above was entered in the National Register of Historic Places on the date listed above.

If you have any questions concerning this, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Keith A. Sculle".

Keith A. Sculle
National Register Coordinator

KAS:ra

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National Park Service

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received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections**1. Name**

historic Municipal Courts Building, Lake View Building

and or common 116 South Michigan Avenue

2. Location

street & number 116 South Michigan Avenue _____ not for publication

city, town Chicago _____ vicinity of

state Illinois code _____ county Cook code _____

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
☐ district	☐ public	☒ occupied	☐ agriculture	☐ museum
☒ building(s)	☒ private	☐ unoccupied	☒ commercial	☐ park
☐ structure	☐ both	☒ work in progress	☒ educational	☐ private residence
☐ site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	☐ entertainment	☐ religious
☐ object	☐ in process	☒ yes: restricted	☐ government	☐ scientific
	☐ being considered	☐ yes: unrestricted	☐ industrial	☐ transportation
		☐ no	☐ military	☐ other:

4. Owner of Property

name 116 South Michigan Associates

street & number 814 N. Franklin, Suite 300

city, town Chicago _____ vicinity of _____ state Illinois

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cook County Recorder of Deeds

street & number 118 North Clark Street

city, town Chicago _____ state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveystitle Illinois Historic Structures Survey has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ nodate circa 1972 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Department of Conservation

city, town Springfield _____ state Illinois

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6. Representation in Existing Surveys (continued)

Register of Potential Landmarks
Commission on Chicago Historical and Architectural Landmarks
320 N. Clark St., #516
Chicago, Illinois 60610

9. Bibliography (continued)

Press, 1964.

Process Architecture 35: The Chicago School of Architecture.
Tokyo, Japan: Process Architecture Publishing Comapny, 1982.

Withey, Henry F. Pathburn Withey. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects, deceased. Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970.

7. Description

Condition

☒ excellent
☒ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☒ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
moved date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Summary

116 South Michigan is a sixteen-story skeleton frame building located in downtown Chicago. The building is approximately 182 feet tall and has a forty foot street frontage and a 172 foot depth. The facade of the building is sheathed in white terra cotta, and the design of the terra-cotta ornament is simple, refined and emphasizes the verticality of the structure. The facade has many large, regularly placed windows. The first floor facade includes a storefront and entrance to a public lobby. The public spaces of the first floor and the facades retain much of their historic appearance.

At the time of this writing, the building at 116 South Michigan Avenue is undergoing restoration and rehabilitation. The author interviewed the architects in charge of the restoration and reviewed copies of the current design documents and existing historic drawings for the building. The following description is based upon this information and upon field inspection of the building conducted over the past several months and up to the week of submittal of this document.

Description

116 South Michigan Avenue is located on the west side of Michigan Avenue between Adams and Monroe Streets in downtown Chicago. It is sited across the street from the north grounds of the Art Institute of Chicago. Other buildings in this block and north and south along the west side of Michigan Avenue for several blocks are similar in age and height to 116 South Michigan. The building directly south of 116 South Michigan is the Peoples Gas Building, designed in 1911 by D. H. Burnham & Company. The building directly north of 116 South Michigan is the Illinois Athletic Club, designed in 1908 by Barnett, Haynes & Barnett, which is currently undergoing renovation.

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The building is sixteen stories in height, with an additional attic story, and its street frontage is very narrow in relation to its height. The east facade is divided into three vertical bays which are continuous along the entire height of the building. The building is divided into three horizontal layers: a base, consisting of the first and second floors; a middle section, consisting of the third through sixteenth floors; and a top, consisting of the attic story, cornice and parapet.

White, salt-glazed terra cotta covers the east facade of the building. The terra cotta has a matte rather than glossy finish. Decorative courses of terra cotta divide the three major horizontal sections of the building, while vertical moldings define and emphasize the vertical bays. Terra-cotta arches surmount the three bays at the top of the sixteenth floor. At the seventeenth floor, wider terra-cotta piers divide the three bays. The end piers are ornamented with pendants which extend below the horizontal course at the bottom of the seventeenth floor. A simple terra-cotta cornice and parapet top the elevation.

The terra-cotta ornament is generally quite close to the wall plane of the building, and is enclosed in bands or panels. The vertical bands of ornament are continuous, while the horizontal courses are divided into individual rectangular panels below each window. The vertical bands along the sides of the facade and along the sixteenth-story arches are detailed with a stylized bead-and-reel motif, contained within narrow moldings. The spandrels below each window are bordered by a key pattern, also contained within narrow moldings. The wider, continuous horizontal band above the first floor contains a series of Renaissance-style floral patterns inset within square moldings. Individual window sills have dentilated trim along the lower edge, while bead-and-reel moldings follow the major horizontal course above the second floor. A vertical column of inset beads ornaments each pier at the seventeenth floor. Stylized floral motifs ornament the piers at the second floor.

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The visual effect of the terra-cotta ornament is subtle, since the decoration is close to the wall surface and delicately detailed. The continuous vertical terra-cotta molding emphasizes the height of the building, as the framed ornament and banding around the windows acts as a counterpoint to the verticality, thereby strengthening the cellular quality of the facade, emphasizing the structural system behind the terra cotta cladding.

The facade of the building retains much of its original appearance and historic fabric, as documented by historic drawings and photographs. The ground-floor lobby entrance and storefronts constitute three large openings in the base of the building, surmounted by three large single panels of glass in the second-story facade. The windows from the third through sixteenth floors are paired, double-hung sash windows. Three low windows, each divided into three panels, are set into the attic story.

The first-floor facade is divided into three bays by two large painted wood columns. The center bay is a single large window with a fixed transom above, while the north and south bays contain entrances. The entrance on the north leads to the building lobby, and contains bronze and glass double doors which extend to the full height of the bay below the transoms. A new door system is presently being installed in the south bay.

The interior public spaces of the first floor are located in the north bay and include, from east to west, an entrance vestibule, lobby, stair vestibule, east elevator lobby, and west elevator lobby. These public spaces are currently under construction, and restoration is partially complete. The south section of the first floor is planned as tenant space and is under construction at this time.

The vestibule at the east entrance to the building has a coffered marble ceiling and marble walls which have been cleaned. The lower section of the walls has recently been restored to match the original marble. The new marble is an Alabama cream marble. The exterior doors at the east side of the vestibule are, as noted above, large bronze doors. These doors have inset glass panels and bars. The doors at the west side of the vestibule, separating this area from the lobby, are painted aluminum frames with central glass

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panels, matched in appearance to the original bronze doors which are no longer extant in the building. The floor has been restored to its original design, with a border of terrazzo surrounded by inlaid bronze expansion strips.

The vestibule leads directly to the lobby of the building. This space has a barrel-vaulted ceiling ornamented with plaster relief. The relief contains floral and fruit motifs and female figures. High-relief areas of the ceiling are painted a gloss white color, while low, undecorated areas are painted flat white with a light green-blue tint. The plaster ornament in the barrel vault is original; it has been patched and repaired during the current restoration program. Single, low-ceilinged niches are inset on the north and south sides of the east section of the lobby. The walls and ceilings of these niches are painted white with a slight green-blue tint. The lobby floor is modern vinyl asphalt tile.

West of the lobby is the stair vestibule, with the staircase located along the north wall. The ceiling of the stair vestibule is flat rather than vaulted, but is similar in ornamentation to that of the lobby and has also been painted. A double door in the south wall leads to a large, currently unoccupied tenant space. The marble stair treads and walls of the stairwell are original, and have been cleaned and restored. The stairs have openwork cast-iron risers which have also been cleaned and restored. An ornamental bronze railing and baluster extend from the marble newel. The marble and bronze have also recently been cleaned and restored.

The rear part of the first floor is divided into two elevator lobbies. The east elevator lobby houses one freight and three passenger elevators. The ceiling of this lobby is barrel vaulted and similar in appearance to the main lobby vault, from which it is offset. The north wall of the elevator lobby has a marble base and pilasters. The south wall retains its original marble sheathing, which has been cleaned. New elevators with painted steel doors have been installed during the present restoration program. At the east end of the north side of the east elevator lobby, a

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vaulted niche in the wall has been reconstructed. This space had been considerably modified and was recently partially enclosed, paneled, and occupied by a cigar store. However, when these modifications were removed, the original vaulted ceiling and arched entry were revealed and could be restored.

A set of double doors separates the east and west elevator lobbies. At the east end of the north wall is a modern freight elevator. Beyond this elevator is a stairway which extends the height of the building. The stair risers are openwork cast iron, similar to those in the main lobby. The railing of the back stairs is simpler than that of the main lobby stairway. West of the stairway is a large lift which extends from the basement to the first floor. All walls in the west elevator lobby are plastered and painted, with the exception of the wainscot, which is cleaned and restored marble. A service entrance for the building is located beyond the west elevator lobby.

The upper floors of the building are tenant space. At the present time, the third through eighth floors are occupied by offices and a music school. These floors are organized along single-loaded corridors. The ninth through sixteenth floors are unoccupied, undivided and under construction at this time. A light well is located along the south side of the middle portion of the building, above the second floor. The hallways and tenant spaces have been significantly modified over the course of the building's existence. Selective restoration and renovation are currently in progress.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion	
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science	
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture	
1600-1699	X architecture	education	military	social	
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian	
1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater	
X 1900-	communications	industry	X politics government	transportation	
		invention		other (specify)	

Specific dates 1906 (4-story add. 1912) Builder Architect Jenney, Mundie & Jensen

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary

Through its origins as a Municipal Courts facility and subsequent conversion to a rental office building, 116 South Michigan Avenue has retained its architectural presence and integrity. In so doing, it has significantly contributed to the distinctive Michigan Avenue architectural milieu. In their design for the building, the firm of Jenney, Mundie & Jensen, descendant of the practice established by William LeBaron Jenney in 1868, carried on in the spirit of the Chicago School of which Jenney was such a vital force. The architectural significance of the building is paralleled by its historic merit; it is of interest in terms of Chicago's municipal and commercial history.

History

The building at 116 South Michigan Avenue was constructed in 1906 as a City facility. Beginning in 1905 with the demolition of a previous city hall structure and continuing through 1911, when the current City Hall was completed, the City of Chicago housed various municipal agencies in rented facilities throughout the Loop. The twelve-story terra-cotta building was commissioned by real estate entrepreneur Jacob L. Kesner for leasing to the City to house its courtrooms and associated services. The City vaults were also situated in the basement of 116 South Michigan.

The building, designed by the firm of Jenney, Mundie & Jensen, is constructed with a skeleton frame. The steel columns are encased in masonry, and the building has tile arch floors for fire-proofing. The east facade is faced with white terra cotta, and had a cast iron shop-front. The skeleton frame allowed the architect to open up the facade with many large windows. A light court on the north side of the building above the second floor admits additional natural light. The interior first floor public spaces bore marble insignia identifying the Municipal Courts building.

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The City vacated the building by November of 1911, upon completion of the new City Hall. Kesner had developed the Municipal Courts building as a speculative venture, understanding that the building would be occupied only temporarily by the City. However, he was able to take **advantage of the speculative potential of a commercial structure at this location.** In 1912, four additional stories were built on top of the existing structure from plans by Jenney, Mundie & Jensen. The design for the new floors followed that of the existing floors closely, and also continued the proportions and ornament of the east facade. A slightly smaller and simpler cornice replaced the 1906 cornice.

The interior public spaces of the Municipal Courts building were made more elaborate to accommodate the new commercial occupancy. Certain features of the 1906 design for the interior were retained in the 1912 design, including the coffered marble ceiling of the entrance vestibule. Other decorative features of the interior were revised within the decade after original construction. For example, the vaulted ceilings in the lobby are not original to the Municipal Courts building. Above the barrel vaults, decoratively painted flat ceilings are still extant.

In 1917, the same firm, renamed Mundie and Jensen, provided architectural services for the building. Modifications to the interiors of the upper floors and major alterations to the interior of the first floor were completed at this time. Beginning in 1917, architectural drawings and advertisements refer to the building as the "Lake View Building," an indication of its prestige as a commercial rental property. Building improvements were again designed by Mundie and Jensen in 1928 and 1929, when a new penthouse and skylights were added at the west end of the roof.

The Client

116 South Michigan is one of three building developed by Kesner in association with Jenney, Mundie & Jensen and their successor firm, Mundie and Jensen. The Kesner Building at the northeast corner of Madison and Wabash Streets, constructed in 1910, is a seventeen-story building designed by Jenney, Mundie & Jensen. The Consumer Building at

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the northwest corner of State Street and Quincy Court, designed in 1913, is a twenty-one story building designed by Mundie and Jensen.

Jacob Levi Kesner, Chicago real estate entrepreneur, was born in London, England in 1865, and arrived in Chicago with his family in 1876. In 1887, Kesner married Betty Frohmann with whom he had one child, Lucile. Kesner was employed at The Fair department store for thirty-two years, eventually serving as General Manager from 1895 through 1910. During this period, Kesner was involved in real estate speculation and building. He left The Fair store in 1910 to devote himself to real estate interests.

Kesner's business and civic interests made him a major figure in the development of downtown Chicago real estate. Through his own firm, he managed real estate loans, insurance, management and investments. In addition, he was President of the State and Quincy Building Corporation and a director of the Chicago Bank of America. Kesner also served as president of the State Street Improvement Association and was a member of the Building Manager's Association, the Chicago Real Estate Board, and the Senior Council of the Chicago Association of Commerce.

The Architects and the Design

Architects for the 1906 building and its 1912 addition were Jenney, Mundie & Jensen of Chicago. William LeBaron Jenney (1832-1907) was born in Massachusetts and educated there in engineering. He traveled to Paris to pursue architectural studies. Returning to the United States at the onset of the Civil War, he served on the Engineering staff of the Union Army. Jenney left military service after the war, and established an architectural office in Chicago in 1867. Following the Great Fire of 1871, he was a leading proponent of Chicago's architectural reconstruction. His work in the next several decades included the renowned Home Insurance Building of 1885, and numerous other major office and commercial buildings.

In 1891, Jenney entered into partnership with William H. Mundie, a former draftsman in his office. Mundie was born in Ontario, Canada, and was educated in architecture. In 1884, he traveled to Chicago

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where he immediately found employment as a draftsman with Jenney's office. In 1905, Jenney took Elmer Jensen, who had been associated with the firm since 1885, into partnership. At that time, the firm name was changed to Jenney, Mundie & Jensen. Jensen was named a partner to assist with the work of the expanding practice and also because of Jenney's failing health. Jenney retired to California in 1905, where he died two years later. Records and architectural drawings of Jenney, Mundie & Jensen are currently in the possession of Jensen and Halstead, Ltd., of Chicago.

Through his design for the Home Insurance Building, Jenney is known as the inventor of the skeleton frame structure for high-rise buildings. Despite his interest in technical innovations, the aesthetic expression and ornament of his buildings were strongly influenced by traditional motifs. Elmer C. Jensen felt that Jenney's primary interest was in creating new structural systems, and that while Jenney recognized that the new structure held new aesthetic possibilities, he was not greatly interested in pursuing that aspect of architectural design.(1) Within traditional materials and motifs, a range of aesthetic expression exists in commercial buildings by Jenney's firm in downtown Chicago. The traditional forms of the Home Insurance Building of 1885 (demolished) and The Fair Store of 1891 (completely modified and under demolition) belie their structural innovation. In contrast, the similarly derived classical elements of the Ludington Building at the southwest corner of Eleventh Street and Wabash Avenue, constructed in 1891, are subsidiary to the strikingly cellular configuration of its facades. This design is a more forceful expression of the innovative skeletal construction. By its similarly straightforward expression, 116 South Michigan has a strong affinity to the Ludington Building rather than to the former examples.

The grammar of the Chicago School was in transition throughout the early part of the twentieth century. The three buildings designed by Jenney, Mundie & Jensen and their successor firms for J. L. Kesner represent the range of expression within buildings of this school during this period. The brick facades of the Kesner Building have a more planar and solid appearance than the facade of 116 South Michigan, due to the regular punched window openings and lack of expression of vertical elements. The terra-cotta clad facades of the Consumer Building, with its strong definition of continuous vertical piers, is

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more similar to 116 South Michigan Avenue. Despite this pronounced verticality of expression, the Consumer Building facade is a less emphatic statement of the skeletal system than the grid-like facade of 116 South Michigan Avenue.

Its date of construction in relation to other Chicago School structures, together with the cellular configuration of its Michigan Avenue elevation, identifies this building as among the last of those Chicago School structures that directly expressed their skeletal construction in a manner systematized by Holabird & Roche in the Marquette Building of 1893, the Mandel Brothers Building of 1900, and other designs, and which reached its aesthetic culmination in Louis Sullivan's Schlesinger and Meyer (Carson, Pirie, Scott) Store.

Criteria and Integrity

116 South Michigan is a characteristic example of major Chicago commercial and public building just after the turn of the century. It is unique in its early function as a Municipal Courts facility, and in its successful transition to commercial office and retail space. 116 South Michigan is a building of historical significance because of its role in Chicago municipal history and in the development of Michigan Avenue, and of architectural significance as an example of Jenney, Mundie & Jensen's work as well as for its carefully detailed and artistic terra-cotta facade. The firm of Jenney, Mundie & Jensen was responsible for many of the best known office and commercial buildings in downtown Chicago at the time. 116 South Michigan therefore meets Criterion C by embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction; representing the work of a master; and possessing high artistic values.

116 South Michigan possesses integrity of the following factors: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The building is especially noteworthy for its integrity of setting; it occupies a prominent location in Chicago, directly across from the Art Institute on the city's main boulevard. 116 is an integral element of a solid wall of contemporaneous buildings, diverse in scale but similar in materials and detailing, which collectively

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impart an architectural character and dynamism to this stretch of Michigan Avenue. The block of which 116 South Michigan is a part contains monuments to several major architectural firms, including Holabird & Roche's Monroe Building and D.H. Burnham & Company's People's Gas Building. The Monroe Building was completed in 1912, the People's Gas Building in 1911, and the Illinois Athletic Club Building just north of 116 South Michigan in 1908. The construction of 116 South Michigan in 1906 and subsequent addition in 1912 make the building in question an important part of the development of the overall Michigan Avenue streetscape. Like many of the other facades along this stretch of Michigan Avenue, the east elevation of 116 South Michigan remains essentially unchanged from its historical appearance. It is therefore an important part of a streetscape which is essential to the character of the entire city.

The building is also notable for its integrity of feeling. While some modifications have been made to the lower floor facade and to the interior lobbies, these elements of the building still retain the character and atmosphere of their historic appearance. The current restoration program has returned much of the historic fabric in the public areas of the building to its historic appearance. It is not difficult to envision the historic appearance of the vestibule or lobbies. The facade, well-documented in photographs from all periods of the building's development, retains nearly all of its historic fabric and still portrays its historic character.

Footnote

- (1) Jensen is quoted in Carl W. Condit, The Chicago School of Architecture (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), p.85.

